

A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE  
OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA FAMILY

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY HEALTH DIVISION  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
BRITISH COLUMBIA  
DECEMBER 1989

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| <u>TITLE</u>              | <u>PAGE</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Introduction           | 1           |
| 2. Marriage               | 7           |
| 3. Divorce                | 15          |
| 4. Fertility Trends       | 24          |
| 5. Mobility               | 33          |
| 6. Single Parent Families | 45          |

## INTRODUCTION

This profile of the British Columbia family provides an interesting set of descriptive facts. What is the family in 1989? What characteristics of British Columbian families have changed in recent years?

The purpose of this report is to serve as a planning tool for the Division of Community and Family Health in the Ministry of Health. To this end the report . . .

- 1) Portrays statistical data based on the Canadian Census and the Annual Reports of B.C. Vital Statistics concerning the following topics:
  - i) Marriage
  - ii) Divorce
  - iii) Fertility Trends
  - iv) Mobility
  - v) Single Parent Families
- 2) Aims to give a balanced, accurate assessment which is easily understandable.
- 3) Includes data which will aid practical decision making regarding service delivery.

## PRESENTATION OF DATA

A statistical snapshot both communicates and conceals information. As accurate and honest as it may be regarding the moment, it provides only a frozen set of facts.

Change measured over the short run can be misleading since it suggests a trend in a particular direction which in some cases is simply false. Demographers point out that, "the meaning of change in a particular indicator of family life depends on the time frame it is placed in. If we look at trends over too short a period of time - say 10 to 20 years - we may think we are seeing a marked change, when in fact an older pattern may be re-emerging."<sup>1</sup>

An example of this tendency arises in comparisons of data from the 1970's and 80's to that of the 1940's and 50's. The unique changes occurred in the 40's and 50's. Young adult's of the 80's are more like their grandparents than their parents in some ways such as age at marriage and fertility rate.

In order to minimize these shortcomings, a decision was made to present longitudinal data whenever this information was available and relevant. In order to understand better the picture in British Columbia we have made comparisons with the population of Canada in many instances.

The report provides a summary of key statistics at the end of each section. This presentation enables a convenient means of relating co-existing factors using a common basis such as year. It is our hope to allow readers to make creative observations and to ask questions that will stimulate more finely tuned research concerning the family.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD FAMILY CHANGE

The media, professional journals and the general public have been proclaiming the imminent demise of "the family" since the mid 60's. Hand in hand with the implied concern about societal disintegration is a growing nostalgia for the old fashioned family. Some of this concern is unfounded and interferes with an objective understanding of the attributes and problems of families in British Columbia now. Aspects of the family have changed, some of this change has been a return to older patterns such as an older average age at first marriage, some of the change is new such as the annual divorce rate. The most dramatic yet least considered change has probably occurred in the expansion of the family life cycle and the resulting consequences.

The duration of marriage has not changed as dramatically as isolated statistics suggest. Earlier in this century the vast majority of couples remained married till the death of one spouse - but the average age of death was 48 years old in 1930.<sup>2</sup> A couple were rarely both living when their last child left home. Today child bearing occurs over a shorter period and couples are in a position to live together free of primary childcare responsibilities for several decades. Choosing a mate for life includes a new dimension in duration and relationship.

Nostalgia promotes a vision of the closely knit extended family with subtle assumptions about glowing health and loving relationships. Historically, people were more dependent on each other for their basic survival. Closeness or at least proximity was not necessarily a question of choice but a fact of life. There were exceptions. The young immigrant men who made dramatic breaks with their extended

family to find work in British Columbia's natural resource industry are an example. Early British Columbia Vital Statistics convey a picture of life coloured by what we would now regard as early or preventable death: death at child birth, death of infants, death due to communicable disease.

The vast majority of British Columbia families now enjoy better health and a higher standard of living than ever before. On the other hand the current trends of two working parents, high divorce rates, low fertility rates and single parenthood have created problems we don't necessarily have experience at identifying or solving. Current family characteristics have introduced concerns about human well-being perhaps different but certainly as legitimate as historic problems.

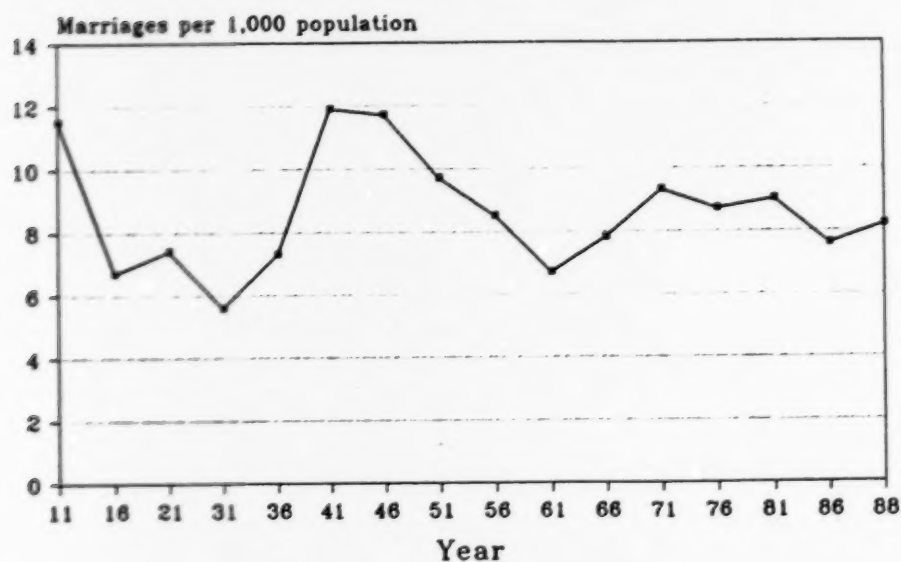
# MARRIAGE

## MARRIAGE

The last few decades have involved changes in marital relationship characteristics and in the expectations of the parties. Recent statistics show trends of delayed marriage, increased common-law unions and divorce rates and marked increases in women's participation in the work force. All of these factors have significantly altered the image of marriage. They have also been regarded as an indication that the institution of marriage is becoming less valued by the marriageable population.

British Columbia statistics have not confirmed this assumption.

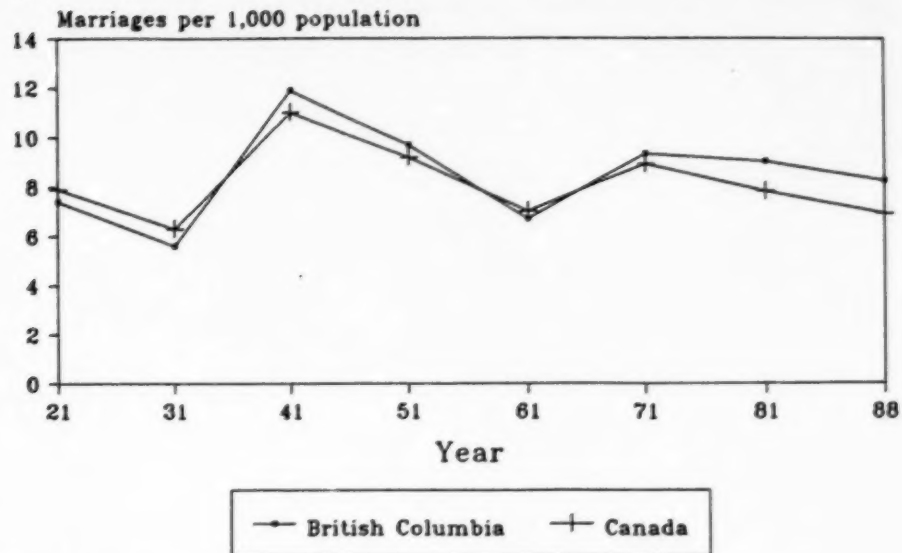
## MARRIAGE RATE, 1911-1988 BRITISH COLUMBIA



Source: Vital Statistics Annual Reports

The crude marriage rate (the number of marriages per 1,000 population per year) was 8.2 marriages per 1,000 population in 1988. The current rate does not in any way demonstrate a low ebb but rather represents an unexceptional mid-line rate. The average marriage rate at 5 year intervals between 1911 and 1986 is 8.6.

## MARRIAGE RATE : 1911-1988 British Columbia & Canada



StatsCanada Cat.84-205.BC Vital Stats

\*1921 CAN.excludes Yukon&NWT

The most recent National Statistics indicate that the Canadian crude marriage rate was 6.9 in 1988. British Columbia has exceeded the Canadian crude marriage rate since 1969.

The concern that there was a growing loss of interest in making a legally binding commitment to marriage was probably somewhat induced by both an increase and a more visible presence in common-law relationships. The phenomena of common-law unions is not new. However, its rise to public prominence in the 1970's was sufficient to enlist a degree of legal sanction in British Columbia involving legislative change. The British Columbia Family Relations Act was amended to include common law relations of not less than two years in the definition of spouse, for the purpose of some sections of the Act.<sup>3</sup>

Common-Law Relationships  
Per Cent of Population in 1984

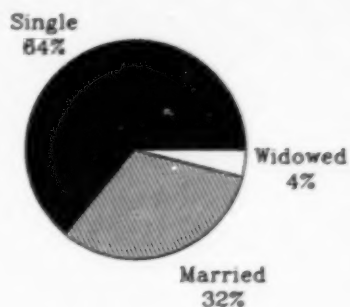
|                                                    | <u>Canada</u> | <u>Atlantic<br/>Provinces</u> | <u>Quebec</u> | <u>Ontario</u> | <u>Prairie<br/>Provinces</u> | <u>B.C.</u> |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>% of Persons Ever<br/>In a Common-Law Union</b> |               |                               |               |                |                              |             |
| <b>Ages 50 and over</b>                            | 5.9           | ...                           | 5.3           | 6.7            | 5.6                          | 7.2         |
| <b>Age 18 - 29</b>                                 | 23.4          | 16.6                          | 28.3          | 19.1           | 24.7                         | 29.0        |

Source: Statistics Canada Cat. 99 - 966, Family History Survey  
... Figure not shown due to high standard of error

The Family History Survey published by Statistics Canada posed life span as opposed to explicit moment in time questions. In considering common-law relationships British Columbia residents showed the highest percentage of common-law unions 7.2% for ages 50 and over, and 29.0% for ages 18 - 29. In contrast the low end was represented by Quebec at 5.3% for ages 50 and over, and the Atlantic provinces at 16.6% for ages 18 - 29. The Family History Survey in its Canada-wide sample found that the vast majority of persons engaging in common-law relationships had been a partner in only one relationship. It stated that the common law union was, "as much a prelude to marriage as a substitute for it".<sup>4</sup> The British Columbia marriage rate is well within the current Canadian analysis that shows that 9 out of 10 men and women marry at least once in their life time.<sup>5</sup>

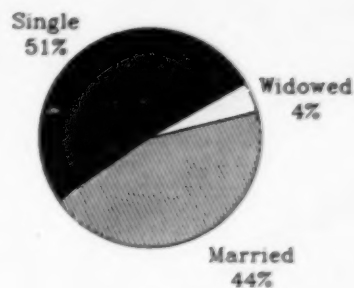
## MARITAL STATUS : BRITISH COLUMBIA

1881



Census of Canada 1931

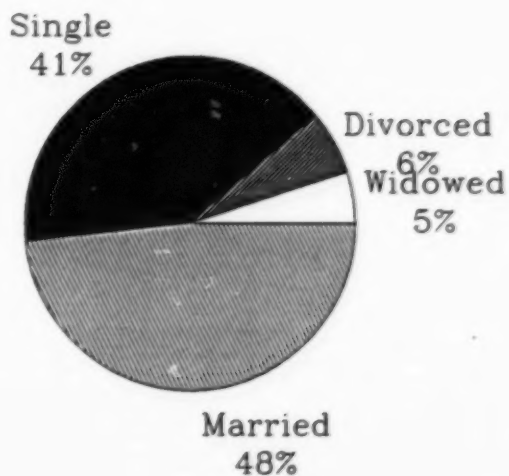
1931



\*Divorced 0.3%

Census of Canada 1931

1986



Census of Canada 1986

Historic census statistics allow a comparison of marital status of the British Columbia population over time. The most remarkable comparison in the light of publicized concern about marriage in the 1980's is that proportionately more British Columbians are married now than ever before.

In 1881, 32% of the total population was married, in 1931, 44% and in 1986, 48%. The increasing proportion is a steady incline over time. The weakness of this particular presentation of data is its failure to distinguish between the population in the marriageable age range to account for differences between size of age groupings or sex. However, it does give a rough picture of the composition of the population and how it has evolved over time.

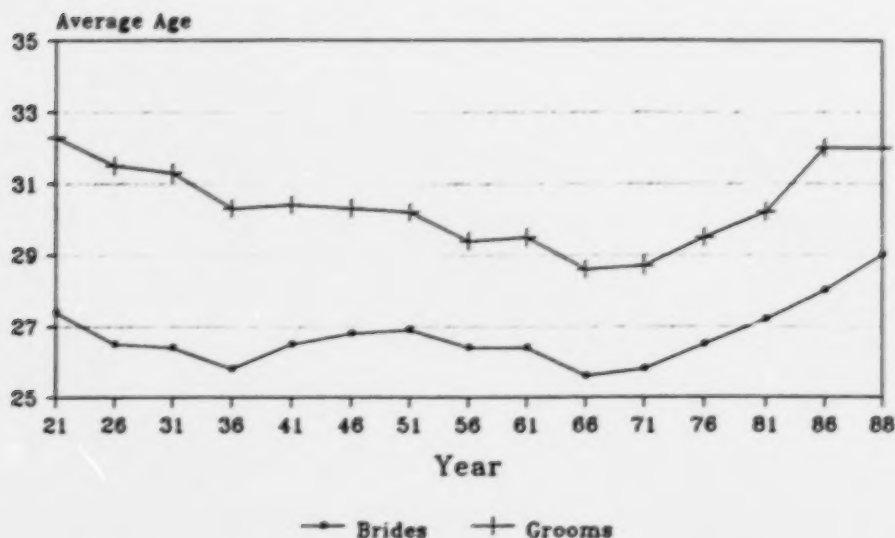
In 1881, 60% of the single population was male, 40% female. Aside from a generally equal sex distribution among children the higher rate of males represented the immigration of young single males pursuing work in logging and mining. Widowhood also was unequally experienced between the sexes with females representing 61% of widowed persons.

1931 shows general movement toward an increased incidence in marriage. The proportionate relationship between single males and females changed slightly to 58% and 42%.

The 1988 chart conceals a sizeable increase in the marriageable population. The baby boom population has swelled the ranks of the marriageable compared to former years. At the same time, increasing longevity has also expanded the actual numbers of married persons. The increase in widowhood in 1988 is also due to longevity among British Columbians. However, females are much more likely to be the survivors. A male/female comparison shows 83% of widowed persons in 1986 were female.

Examined in the context of the entire population 6.1% of all British Columbians indicated a current status of separated or divorced in 1986. This per cent representation risks masking the sizeable number of men, women and children experiencing the repercussions of divorces occurring in earlier years.

# AVERAGE AGE AT MARRIAGE \* BRITISH COLUMBIA BRIDES AND GROOMS



Statistics Canada Cat.84-205

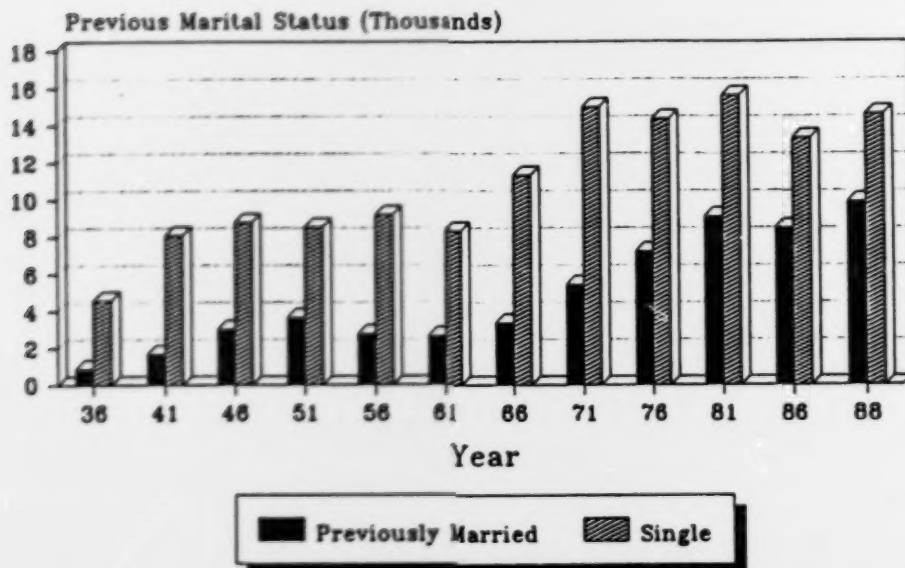
\*First and subsequent marriages

The average age at marriage for brides and grooms has been consistently higher in British Columbia than the national average and with the rare exception is the highest in comparison to other provinces since 1921. Nevertheless, British Columbia has reflected the same general trends as the rest of Canada with an older average age at marriage in the early 1900's, relative stability until the early 50's and then a sharp decline which reversed itself in the late 60's.

In 1921 the average age at marriage for British Columbia brides was 27.4 and grooms was 32.3. It decreased to an all time low in 1966 at which point brides showed an average age of 25.6 while grooms were 28.6. Canadian comparisons of lowest average age were 24.4 for brides and 26.8 for grooms.

Recent years have seen a substantial increase in the average age at marriage for both brides at 29 years and grooms at 32 years in 1988. To some degree this increase in age is due to the inclusion of a growing remarriage population.

## MARITAL STATUS AT TIME OF MARRIAGE 1936 - 1988



BC Vital Statistics Annual Reports 1936-88

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of remarriages. In 1936, remarriage accounted for 16% of all marriages. In 1988, remarriage represented 40% of the marriages in that year. The actual increase in raw numbers is over 9,000.

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|                                        | <u>Per Cent of Population in 1984</u> |                               |               |                |                              |             |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------------|-------------|
|                                        | <u>Canada</u>                         | <u>Atlantic<br/>Provinces</u> | <u>Quebec</u> | <u>Ontario</u> | <u>Prairie<br/>Provinces</u> | <u>B.C.</u> |
| Per Cent with Two<br>or More Marriages | 6.9                                   | 4.5                           | 3.4           | 8.1            | 7.4                          | 12.0        |
| % of Divorced<br>Persons Remarrying    |                                       |                               |               |                |                              |             |
| Men:                                   | 76                                    | 77                            | 62            | 82             | 76                           | 78          |
| Women:                                 | 64                                    | 67                            | 46            | 69             | 68                           | 68          |
| Average Duration<br>of a Divorce       |                                       |                               |               |                |                              |             |
| Men:                                   | 8.3                                   | 7.6                           | 13.7          | 6.2            | 8.1                          | 7.5         |
| Women:                                 | 15.8                                  | 15.0                          | 23.0          | 13.4           | 14.4                         | 13.6        |

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Source: Statistics Canada Cat. 99 - 966, Family History Survey

The Family History Survey of 1984 demonstrated that British Columbian's once again topped the list in comparison to other Provinces showing the greatest propensity to remarry.

MARRIAGE: SUMMARY

- o Highest provincial marriage rate: 11.9/1,000 population in 1941.
- o Lowest provincial marriage rate: 5.6/1,000 population in 1931.
- o Most recent provincial marriage rate: 8.2/1,000 population in 1988.
- o Canadian average marriage rate: 6.9/1,000 population in 1988.
- o B.C. residents were most often in a common-law relationship:  
1984 Canadian Family History.
- o Highest provincial average age at marriage; males 32 years,  
females 29 years, in 1988.
- o Lowest provincial average age at marriage; males 29 years,  
females 26 years, in 1966.
- o Remarriage: 40% of B.C. marriages in 1988.
- o B.C. remarriage rate highest in Canada.

# DIVORCE

## DIVORCE

A sizeable proportion of Canadians particularly British Columbians divorce every year. Divorce is no longer a rare event and has increased dramatically over the last few decades.

The attempt to account for the sudden increase in divorce has produced a multitude of theories. It is important to keep in mind that the increase in divorce and the changes in several other demographic factors such as late marriage and low fertility are not specific to our culture. Identical trends have been occurring in all industrialized countries in the Western world and in Eastern Europe.

A frequently cited reason for the upsurge in divorce has been the changes in the Divorce legislation which have placed fewer restrictions on the procurement of divorce at each amendment. Divorce rates have indeed increased subsequent to the Divorce Act amendments which were introduced in 1968 and 1985. Divorce is now granted upon the sole ground of marital breakdown as proven by separation for a minimum of one year, adultery, physical cruelty or mental cruelty. Before 1968, the only means of terminating a marriage were annulment due to non-consumation of the marriage or divorce upon proof of adultery.

If in fact "lenient" divorce law, in itself, causes increased divorce one might expect similar divorce rates across Canada since the legislation is federal. This is not so. The Provincial divorce rates vary dramatically among Provinces.

The Family Life History Survey compiled by Statistics Canada in 1984 produced the following comparative data.

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|                                               | <u>Per Cent of Population in 1984</u> |                               |               |                |                              |             |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------------|-------------|
|                                               | <u>Canada</u>                         | <u>Atlantic<br/>Provinces</u> | <u>Quebec</u> | <u>Ontario</u> | <u>Prairie<br/>Provinces</u> | <u>B.C.</u> |
| <b>% of Ever-Married<br/>Persons Divorced</b> |                                       |                               |               |                |                              |             |
| Ages 50 +                                     | 9.2                                   | 6.5                           | 5.0           | 10.1           | 10.2                         | 15.9        |
| Ages 30 - 39                                  | 13.7                                  | 8.9                           | 9.7           | 15.2           | 15.0                         | 19.9        |
| <b>% of Marriages<br/>Ending in Divorce</b>   |                                       |                               |               |                |                              |             |
| Men:                                          | 28                                    | 24                            | 28            | 27             | 31                           | 33          |
| Women:                                        | 28                                    | 23                            | 28            | 27             | 31                           | 33          |

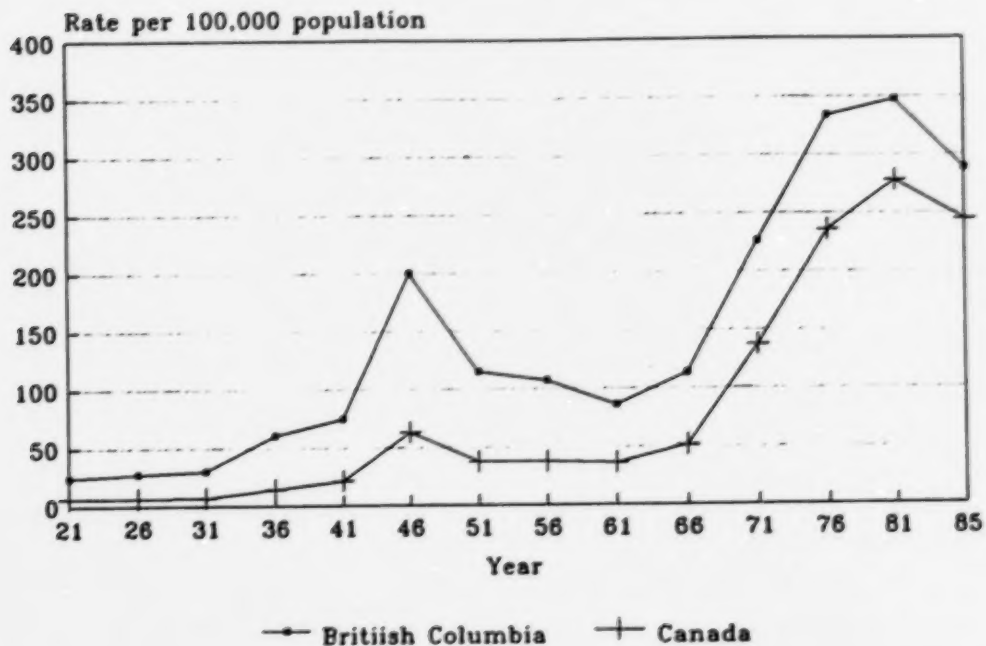
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Source: Statistics Canada Cat. 99 - 966, Family History Survey

Increases in divorce have also been explained in terms of recent changes in economic structures and the introduction of birth control. Formerly, the strict division of labour, as breadwinner or homemaker, encouraged a reciprocal state of dependency between the sexes. Women's ability to control fertility and their entry into the paid labour force has broken this dependence. An American study shows that whereas men are more likely to get married when they have a secure economic status women are more likely to use a higher personal income, "to buy out of marriage".<sup>7</sup>

The real problem with divorce is children. Serial monogamy probably doesn't cause a hardship to society when the individuals are childless. Children, however, are permanent or let us say a long term and labour intensive commitment. We must recognize the very real, sizeable, and permanent segment of our population who are divorced in the formation of family policy.

## DIVORCE RATES, 1921-1985



StatsCan.Vital Stats.Cat.84-205

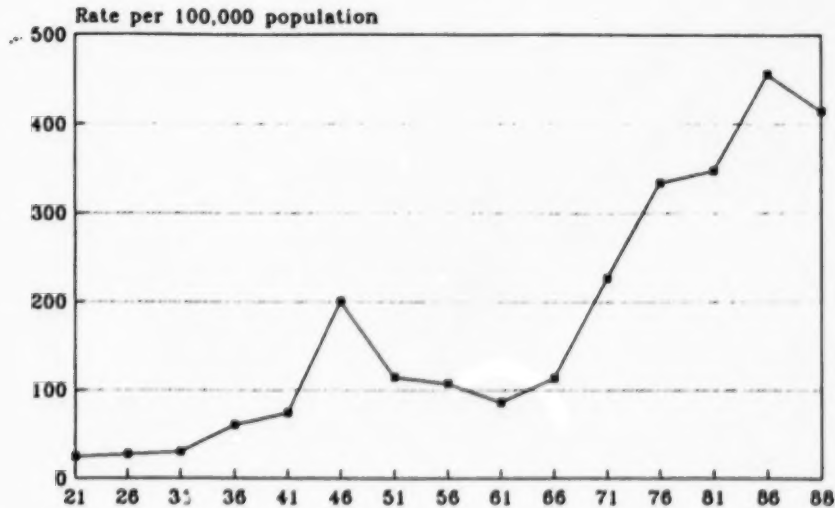
The most dramatic increases in the divorce rate in both British Columbia and Canada as a whole occurred in the years subsequent to the Second World War and subsequent to the amendments of the Divorce Act.

Divorce statistics seem particularly vulnerable to misunderstanding due to the wide variety of ways the data can be presented. The best understanding is achieved by examining the data from a variety of perspectives.

Divorce Statistics: British Columbia, 1985

| <u>Term</u>                             |                          | <u>Definition</u>                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of Divorces                      | 8,330                    | Actual number of divorces occurring per calendar year                                |
| Crude Divorce Rate                      | 288                      | Number of divorces per 100,000 population all ages per year                          |
| Divorce Rate Per Married Woman          | 1,134.4                  | Number of divorces per 100,000 Married Women 15 years and over per year.             |
| Conjugal Status Divorced or Separated   | 176,305                  | Number of people identifying themselves as divorced or separated at the census date. |
| Per Cent of Marriages Ending in Divorce | 33 % male<br>33 % female | Number of persons who have ever been divorced per total number of marriages by sex.  |

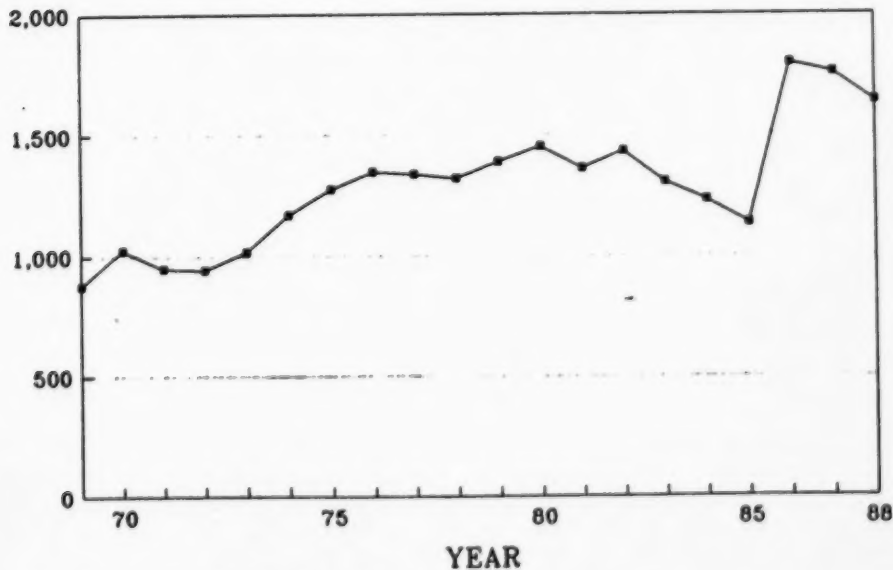
## DIVORCE RATE : BRITISH COLUMBIA 1921 -1988



Source: Vital Statistics Annual Reports

British Columbian data shows a steep rise subsequent to the last amendment of the Divorce Act in 1985. Since this time the divorce rate has declined slightly.

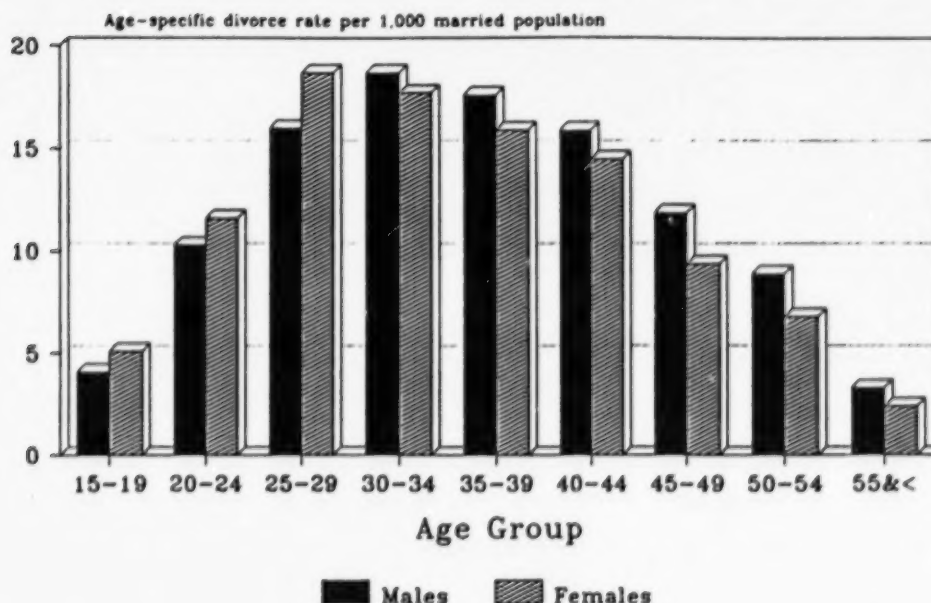
## DIVORCE RATE : BRITISH COLUMBIA 1969-88 PER 100,000 MARRIED WOMEN



Source: BC Vital Statistics Annual Report

When the divorce rate is examined with respect to only the married population the rates are substantially higher and give a more accurate picture of the prevalence of divorce.

## AGE-SPECIFIC DIVORCE RATE BRITISH COLUMBIA:1985

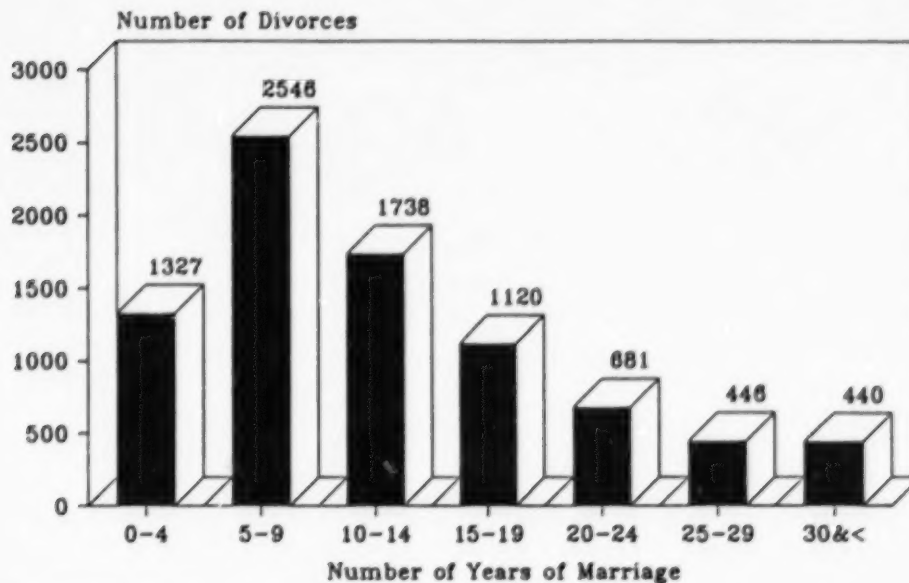


StatsCan.Vital Stats Cat.84-205

Divorce touches all age groupings of married people. The 1985 data indicate that the greatest number of men divorce between ages 30 and 34. The greatest number of women divorce between age 25 and 29. Age specific divorce rates were first studied by Statistics Canada in 1977. The 1977 data shows basically the same age related divorce rate demonstrating no change over this eight year period.

The Average and Median age at Divorce were tracked between 1969 and 1977. In 1969 the average age at divorce was 38 for women and 42 for men in British Columbia. In 1977 the average age at divorce was 35 for women and 38 for men. The older age at divorce in 1969 probably reflects the number of petitioners who waited for the introduction of the less restrictive grounds for divorce of 1968.

## DIVORCE BY NUMBER OF YEARS OF MARRIAGE BRITISH COLUMBIA : 1985



Statistics Canada Cat.84-205

The 1985 census data shows that the greatest number of divorces occurred in marriages of 5 - 9 years duration. This category represents 30% of British Columbia's 1985 divorces.

Over half or 51% of all divorces occurred in marriages of 5 - 14 years duration.

Marriages of 0 - 4 years duration represented 16% of the 1985 divorces.

# NUMBER OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN BY PARTIES TO WHOM CUSTODY WAS GRANTED : B.C.1985

## PETITIONER HUSBAND

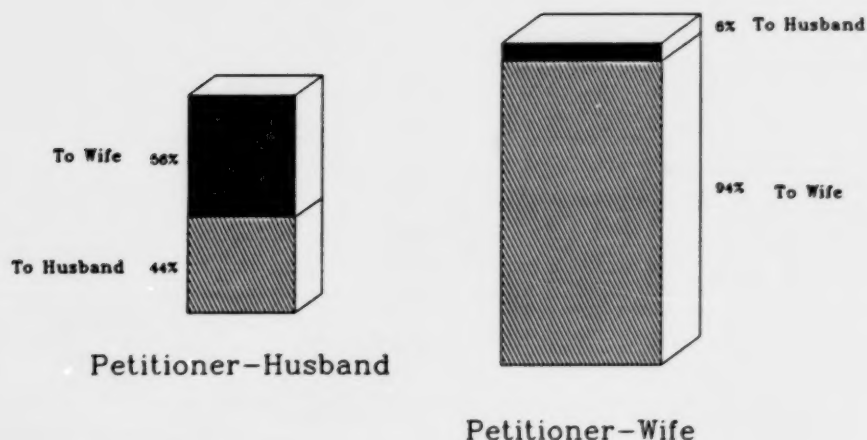
|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| To the petitioner(husband) | 718   |
| To the respondent(wife)    | 907   |
| To other person or agency  | 7     |
| No award of custody made   | 468   |
| total.....                 | 2,100 |

## PETITIONER WIFE

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| To the petitioner(wife)    | 3,342 |
| To the respondent(husband) | 206   |
| To other person or agency  | 20    |
| No award of custody made   | 504   |
| total.....                 | 4,072 |

StatsCan.Vital Stats Cat.84-205

# CUSTODY AWARDS BETWEEN HUSBAND & WIFE BRITISH COLUMBIA : 1985



Source : Statistics Canada Cat.84-205

The 1985 census shows that a total of 6,172 British Columbia children were subject to custody awards in that year. 69% of the custody awards were granted to mothers, 15.7% of the cases did not require custody awards, 15% were granted to fathers, and .3% involved awards to other agencies.

In spite of case law which rejects the "tender years" doctrine<sup>8</sup> and legislation which does not favour one parent over another, custody awards continue to reflect the traditional notion that women, not men, are more appropriate care takers of children.

Joint custody has been considered by the British Columbia courts - but as the lack of statistical category infers has rarely been awarded.<sup>9</sup>

DIVORCE: SUMMARY

- o B.C. traditionally has the highest divorce rate among provinces.
- o 33% of B.C. marriages end in divorce: Canadian Family History 1984.
- o Lowest provincial divorce rate 24/100,000 population in 1921.
- o Highest provincial divorce rate 456/100,000 population in 1986.
- o Highest provincial divorce rate per 100,000 married women 1,795 in 1986.
- o Most recent Provincial divorce rate 414/100,000 population in 1988.
- o Greatest number of men divorcing were aged 30-34 at the 1985 Census.
- o Greatest number of women divorcing were aged 25 - 29 at the 1985 Census.
- o The greatest number of divorces, 30% occurred in marriage of 5-9 years duration at the 1985 Census.
- o Between parents, custody was awarded to 94% of wives and 6% of fathers at the 1985 Census.

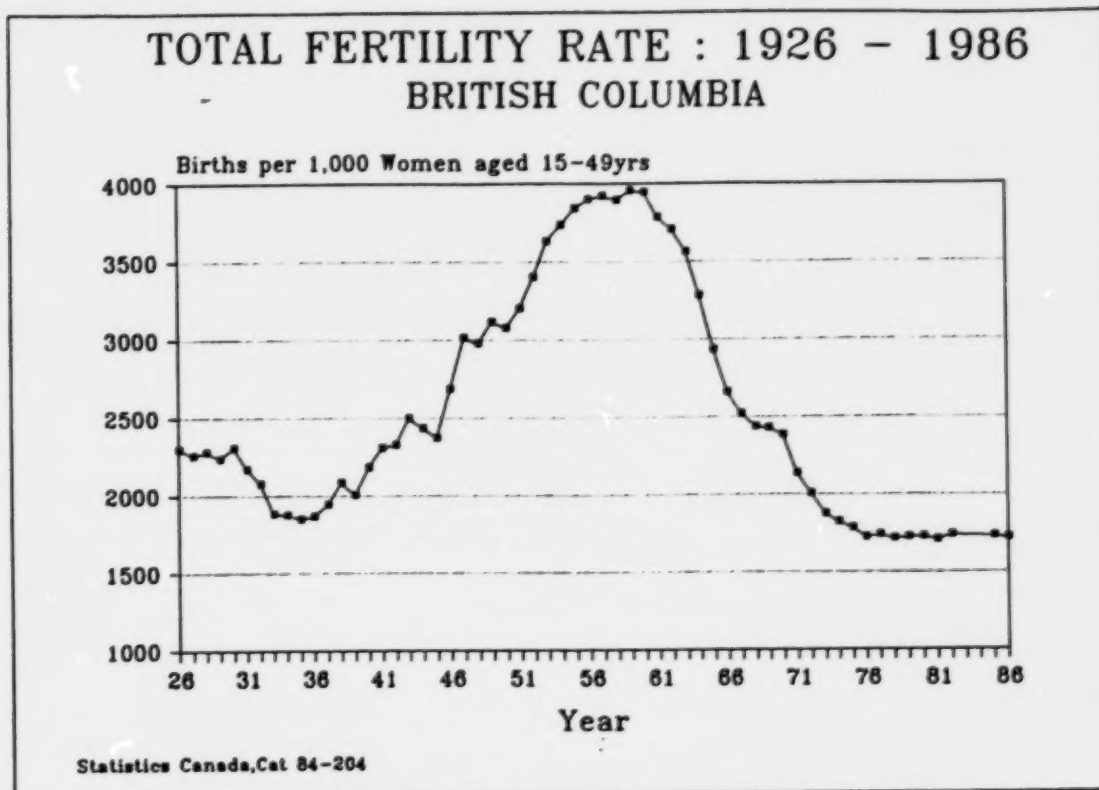
### FERTILITY TRENDS

Fertility trends in British Columbia have mirrored that of Canada. There have been great fluctuations and an overall decline in British Columbia's fertility rate. The fertility rate has been below the population replacement level of 2.1 since 1973. Demographers are suggesting that it is now safe to conclude that we have entered a period of stabilization at a rate of about 1.7.<sup>10</sup> The long term impact of low fertility introduces a host of problematic issues. Currently, there are over 5 British Columbians aged 15 - 64 for every resident who is 65 or over. Population projections based on the current fertility and immigration rates indicate that there will be 4 persons aged 15 - 64 for every person aged 65 and over in the year 2011.<sup>11</sup> This ratio is expected to decline even more as the bulk of the baby boom population reaches age 65 in the late 2020's. This scenario portrays a diminished work force and therefore suggests a decrease in economic growth at a time when the health and housing requirements of the elderly will increase. It may be in the interest of individual families to maintain a small size, however, for the Province as a whole, a stable population size as a minimum is preferred.

It has been suggested that Governments may choose to develop pronatalist policies to try to avert a population shortage problem. The potential strategies have been broken down into three categories i) increase the cost and difficulty in averting births, ii) increase the benefits of having children or iii) decrease the cost of raising children.<sup>12</sup> If an increase in the fertility rate or in any case a desire to forestall a further decrease is seen as important to societal well-being it becomes necessary to address the question of how to mold our society into one that is favourable to child bearing and child rearing.

The decline in fertility has not been a steady decline. There have been periods of dramatic fluctuation. Low fertility is often seen to be the result of some combination of reliable contraception, the accessibility of abortion, the increase in delayed parenthood and the high divorce rates. But none of these factors can account for the almost equivalent low fertility rates of the late 20's or mid 30's. Research and mere observation of the actual years in which fertility declined consistently show a relationship between low fertility and poor economic conditions.<sup>13</sup>

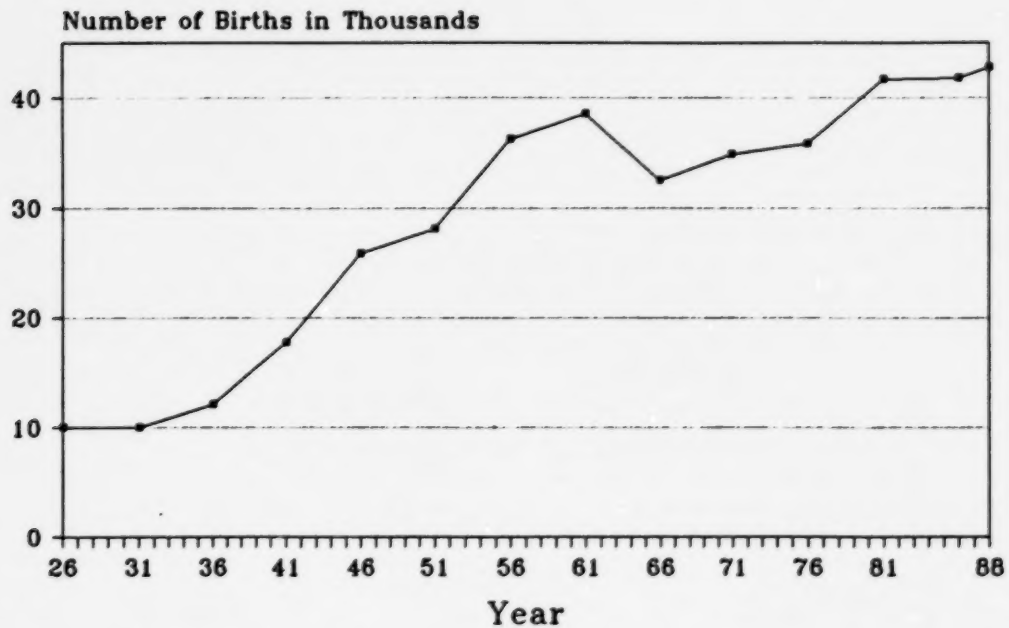
Current fertility trends in British Columbia include increased childlessness among women aged 15 - 44, increased later first births, smaller numbers of families with more than three children and an increase in one and two child families. It has been suggested that the childless trend for some young couples is a transitional stage in which people are waiting for more favourable economic conditions before having children. On the other hand, it may simply reflect a lifestyle preference or cultural trend for delayed birthing.



The graph indicates a decline in the birth rate in the early 1930's concurrent with the poor economic conditions of the day.<sup>14</sup> The rate dramatically increases after the Second World War and stays at a high rate until the mid 60's causing the baby boom. A declining trend then re-emerges in the early 70's reaching an all time low of 1,706 births per 1,000 women in 1981. Since this time the decline appears to have leveled off at a rate below the population replacement level. This low fertility rate does not however mean that the population is not growing. Births continue to outnumber deaths because of the extraordinary large numbers born between 1945 and 1965 who are now at a child bearing age.

# FERTILITY TRENDS

## TOTAL NUMBER OF BIRTHS BRITISH COLUMBIA 1926 - 1988

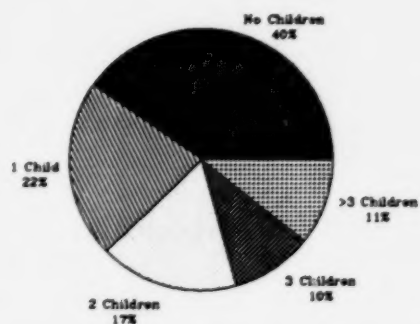


B.C. Vital Statistics Annual Reports

The total number of births in British Columbia has been relatively stable over the last several decades.

## FAMILY SIZE : BRITISH COLUMBIA

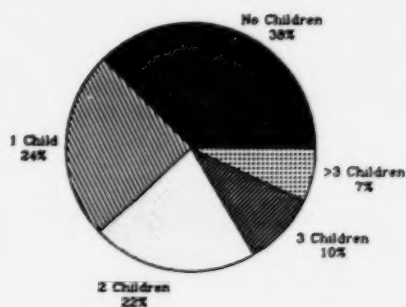
1931



TOTAL 189,359 FAMILIES

Census of Canada 1931

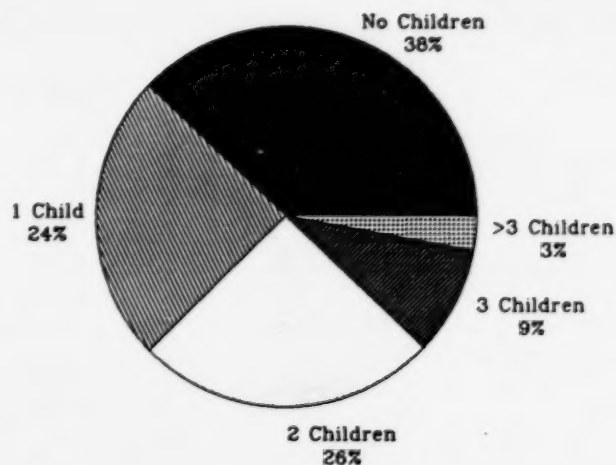
1956



TOTAL 299,845 FAMILIES

Census of Canada 1956

1986



TOTAL 775,880 FAMILIES

Census of Canada 1986

Fertility statistics are showing new trends. There has been a decrease in family size, and women are giving birth to their first child at an older age.

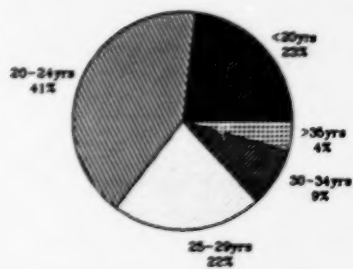
#### FAMILY SIZE

Size of family statistics require qualification since they represent only a point in time not the actual number of children women eventually have. There is a marked decrease in families with more than three children. The 1986 census shows that just 3% of British Columbia families have more than 3 children whereas the percentage was 7% in 1951 and 11% in 1931. The two child family has substantially increased over time. In 1931, 17% of British Columbia families had two children representing 32,225 families. In 1986, 26% or 183,855 families had two children.

There does not appear to be much change in the other categories although it is possible that 1986 was a period of transition thereby showing short term family size statistics. The no child and one child categories capture groups of women who would have produced more children in former times. However, today due to delayed first births or lifestyle choices many of these women may not have subsequent births. Given the present trend it may be that the proportionate size of the no children and one child categories will grow by the next census in 1991. At this time a substantial portion of this group will not graduate to a larger family size as in former times but will be added to a new generation of families with no children or one child.

## FIRST BIRTHS BY AGE OF MOTHER

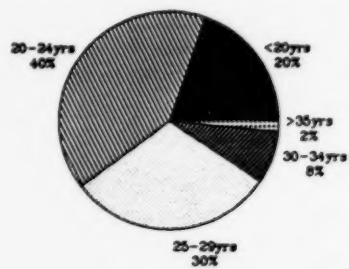
1956



TOTAL FIRST BIRTHS 10,426

B.C. Vital Statistics Annual Report 1956

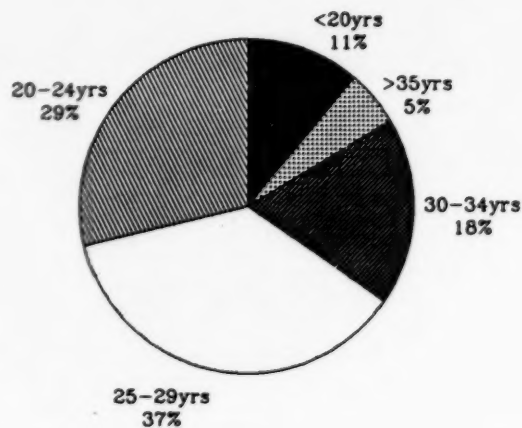
1976



TOTAL FIRST BIRTHS 16,327

B.C. Vital Statistics Annual Report 1976

1988



TOTAL FIRST BIRTHS 18,219

B.C. Vital Statistics Annual Report 1988

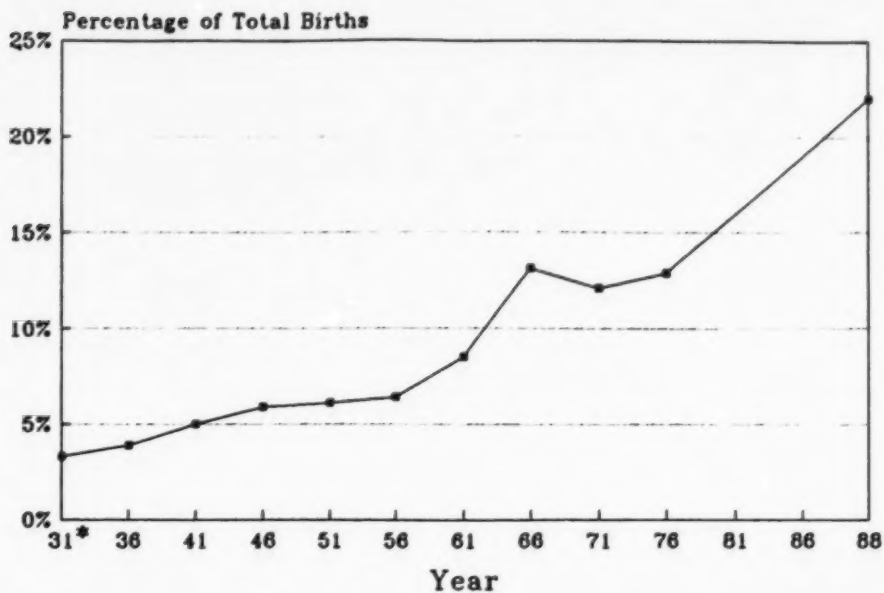
FIRST BIRTHS BY AGE OF MOTHERS

Women are generally having babies at an older age. Age of mother at the time of first birth was first tracked on a provincial basis in 1956. The graphs show the proportionate age group distribution of first births for 1956, 1976, and 1988.

The trend to later first births is demonstrated by the statistics. In 1988, 18% or 3,315 women aged 30-34 were first time mothers. Formerly this age group represented a minor portion of first births at 8% (1,284) in 1976 and 9% (921) in 1956. The increase of first births in the oldest age group 35 and over has not increased as much on a percent basis - 5%, 1988, 2%, 1976, and 4%, 1956. Due to the increase in population, the 35 and older first time mother in 1988 represents a sizeable group at 980.

First births at an early age have declined over time. In 1956, 64% of the births were to young women 24 years and under, in 1976 this group represented 60 percent and in 1988 only 40 per cent of the women fell into this age bracket. The 25 - 29 year old age group has substantially increased from 22% in 1956 to 37% in 1988.

# OUT OF WEDLOCK BIRTHS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL LIVE BIRTHS : BC 1931 - 1988



B.C. Vital Statistics Annual Reports

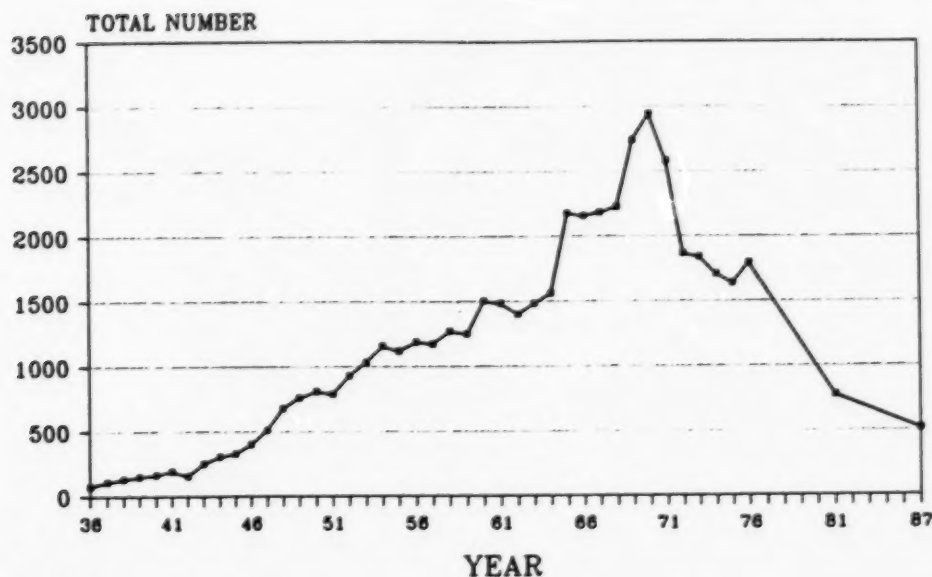
\*1931 percentage represents average of 5yr. period 1931-36

Out of wedlock births have gradually increased over the years. In 1931, 3% of the births were to unmarried women compared to 22% in 1988. This increased fertility among unmarried women is somewhat unexpected in the light of improved contraceptives and the strong decline in the overall fertility rate. However, it could be indicative of the increased economic and personal freedom of women. Formerly the vast majority of out of wedlock births were to young women under 25 years. Only 31% of the out of wedlock births were to women 25 years and over in 1931. In contrast, 56% of the out of wedlock births or 4,404 infants were born to women 25 years and older in 1988.

Changes in the social acceptability of unmarried parenthood have probably played a significant role in this new trend. Categorization under "out of wedlock birth" is based on the British Columbia Registration of Birth Form. It asks if the parents of the child are married to each other and provides for a Yes or No response. Therefore common-law relationships would be included in this category.

It has been documented that the majority of single female parents and their children do not fare well. There are unfavourable social, economic and health consequences to unmarried motherhood, particularly among teenage women.<sup>15</sup>

## ADOPTIONS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 1936 - 1987



BCVitalStatistics Annual Reports 1936-76

+Soc.Ser&Housing Annual Reports(1981,87)fiscal yr

The decline in fertility and the increased numbers of unmarried women who now choose to keep their children has had a notable impact on the availability of adoptive children. Twenty years ago adoption presented a realistic alternative to a childless future. In 1970 there were 2,939 children adopted in British Columbia subsequent to a government recruitment program for adoptive parents.<sup>16</sup> Times have changed. In 1987, there were 513 adoptions. It is estimated that now, 200 prospective couples vie for each healthy child who comes up for adoption.<sup>17</sup>

FERTILITY TRENDS: SUMMARY

- o The population replacement rate is 2.1/women aged 15 - 49 years.
- o In 1931 the fertility rate was 2.2.
- o In 1961, the fertility rate was 3.8.
- o In 1986 the fertility rate was 1.7.
- o The highest provincial fertility rate was 4.0 in 1959.
- o The lowest provincial fertility rate was 1.7 in 1981.
- o The fertility rate is regarded as having stabilized at around 1.7 in B.C. and Canada.
- o The number of births has increased over time due to the increase in number of women in their child bearing years.
- o In 1931 there were 10,005 births.
- o In 1961 there were 38,591 births.
- o In 1988, there were 42,732 births.
- o The most significant changes in family size over time are:
  - o the decrease in families with more than 3 children.
  - o the increase in families with 1 or 2 children.

- o Women are having their first child at a later age. In the 1950's most first time mothers were under 25 years. In the 1980's most first time mothers were 25 - 30 years old.
- o Unmarried women are showing an increased fertility rate over time.
- o In 1988 one in five births was to an unmarried woman.
- o Infertile couples can no longer regard adoption as a realist means of procuring a child.

# MOBILITY

### MOBILITY

Residential mobility is a characteristic feature of modern family life. The 1986 Census shows that over 49% of British Columbia's population five years and older moved at least once in the previous five years. Mobility statistics capture changes in residence which include a move within the same municipality, a move within the same province, and migration from other provinces and countries.

Much population mobility is inherent to life cycle requirements. The book Why People Move comments that, "There is an underlying....order to the apparently restless milling about" of the population.<sup>18</sup> Life cycle changes associated with family change and occupational opportunity are recognized causes of residential mobility. Change in marital status, expansion of the family due to child bearing, and reduced housing needs due to death of a spouse all suggest potential residential adjustments.

American research on residential mobility due to life cycle change has extracted some interesting factors. Young expanding families with inadequate space are highly motivated to change residences. On the other hand, an over-abundance of space does not tend to prompt widows or widowers into residential change.<sup>19</sup>

Mobility rates have been shown to be highest among the newly married. A comparison of mobility rates after marriage with mobility after separation or divorce shows a distinction. Whereas, mobility rates declined rapidly with duration of marriage, they declined more slowly after separation or divorce. After divorce, men and women move at a similar rate when there were no children. When children were present women were much less likely to change residence subsequent to divorce.<sup>20</sup>

Canadian research has consistently found a significant correlation between high mobility and high divorce rates. Provinces characterized by high rates of mobility such as British Columbia and Alberta have high divorce rates. Provinces with low migration rates such as Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick experience low levels of divorce. The literature accounts for this coexistence by stating that high mobility creates a situation of low social integration. People are disconnected with their family, their community, and their culture, all of which, under normal circumstances, would have some bearing on the consideration of divorce. It is suggested that in a situation of high mobility there are fewer social sanctions against divorce and lower social costs.<sup>21</sup>

The process of migration is recognized as a source of stress varying with the degree of adaptation required. Research in the United States and in England demonstrates increased utilization of medical services and/or health problems subsequent to migration.<sup>22</sup> There has been no investigation of the relationship between mobility status and subsequent health care usage in British Columbia. Research of this topic on a municipal basis could be of value to health service planners if indeed high mobility is a red flag for high health care needs.

## MEASURING MIGRATION

Questions regarding mobility status were first introduced in the Canadian Census of 1961 and have been regularly included since 1971. The definitions relied upon in the census and thus applicable to this report are as follows.

Mobility Status refers to the relationship between a person's usual place of residence on Census Day and his/her usual place of residence five years earlier. On the basis of this relationship, the population is classified as non-movers and movers. Within the category movers, a further distinction is made between non-migrants and migrants.

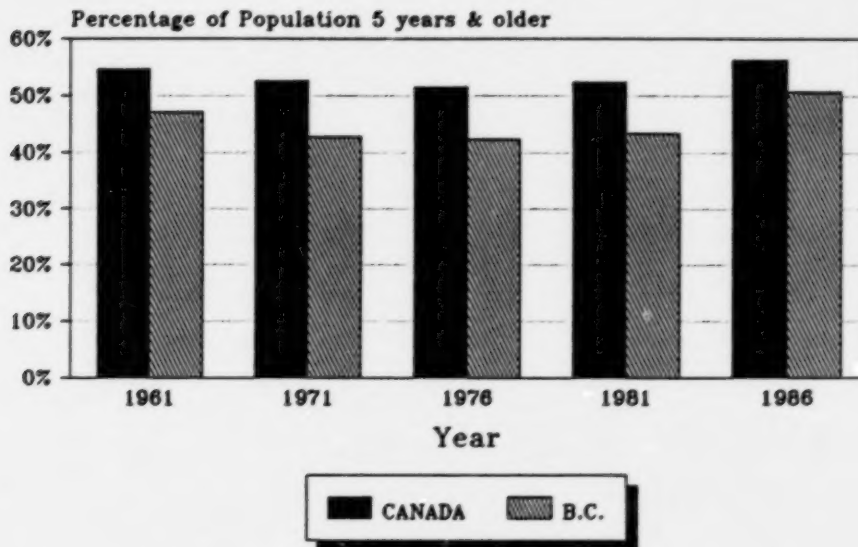
Non-movers are persons who were living in the same dwelling they occupied five years earlier.

Movers are persons who were living in a different dwelling than the one they occupied five years earlier.

Non-migrants are movers who were living within the same census subdivision "municipality" they resided in five years earlier.

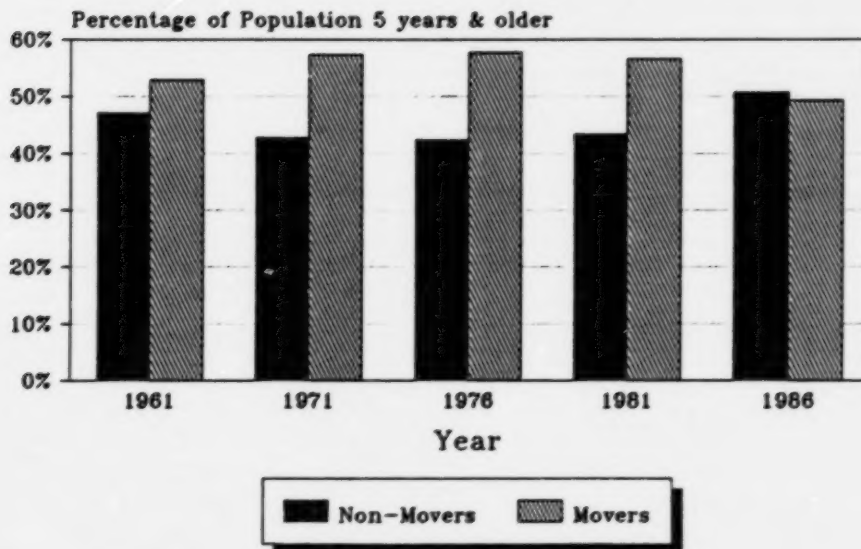
Migrants are movers who were residing in a different municipality or were living outside Canada five years earlier.

## NON-MOVERS : 1961 - 1986 CANADA/BRITISH COLUMBIA COMPARISON



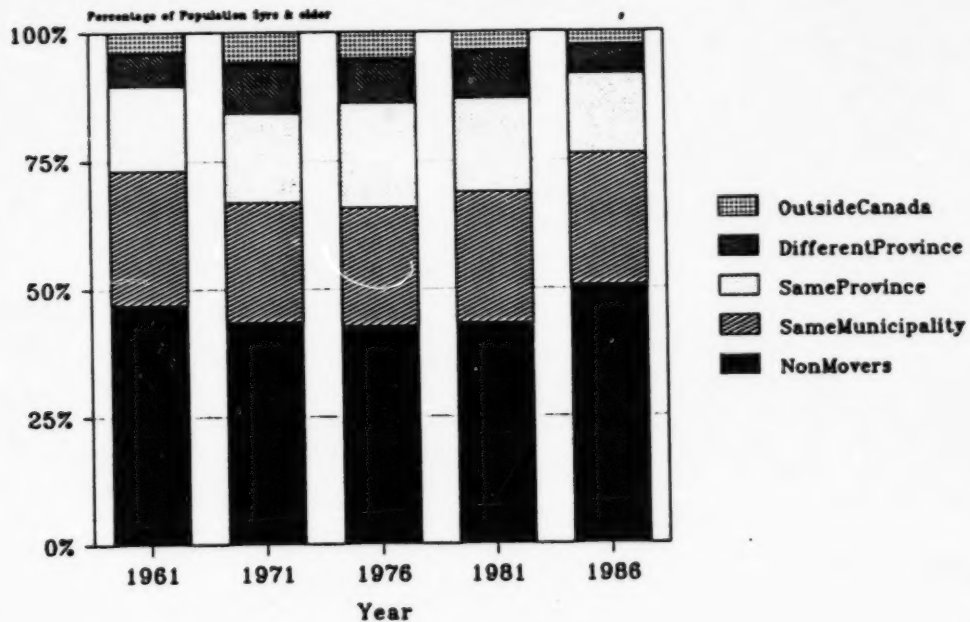
Statistics Canada Cat.93-108

## NON-MOVER/MOVER COMPARISON BRITISH COLUMBIA : 1961 - 1986



Statistics Canada Cat.93-108

## PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION: MOVERS & NONMOVERS BY TYPE OF MIGRATION : BRITISH COLUMBIA



Statistics Canada Cat.93-108

The graph provides a rough comparison of mobility distribution by type of migration for the province between 1961 and 1986.

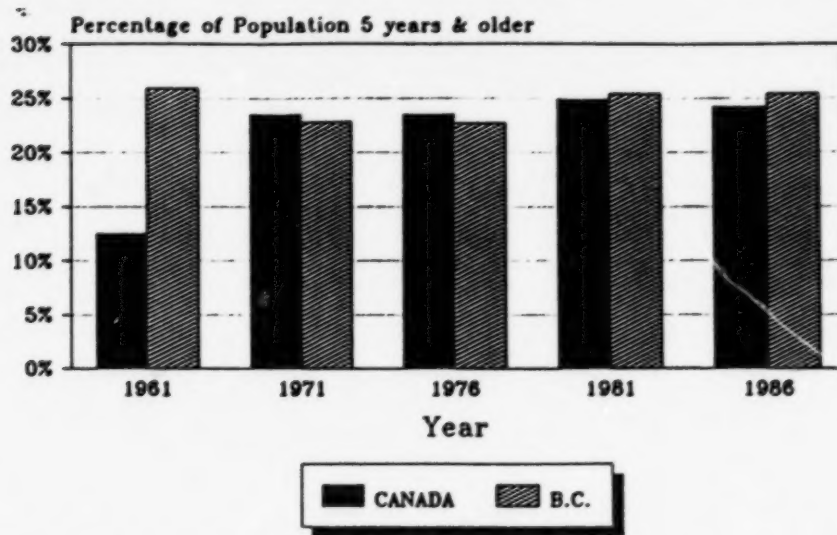
### Non-Movers

British Columbians consistently move more than the average Canadian. From 1961 to 1976 British Columbia had the lowest percentage of non-movers compared to all other provinces. In 1981, and 1986, Alberta showed slightly less residential stability.

British Columbia's non-mover rate stands in stark contrast to the high degree of residential stability of provinces at the other end of the continuum. For example, non-movers in Newfoundland represented 72.5% of the population in 1961 and 70.9% of the population in 1986.

Studies have isolated few factors that can serve as predictive characteristics of non-movers. Generally, mobility declines with age. A longitudinal study in the United States showed that those who were least likely to move owned their own home and had resided there ten or more years.<sup>23</sup> The converse, that newcomers are much more likely to move on has also been substantiated.

## MOVERS : SAME MUNICIPALITY 1961 -1986 CANADA/BRITISH COLUMBIA COMPARISON

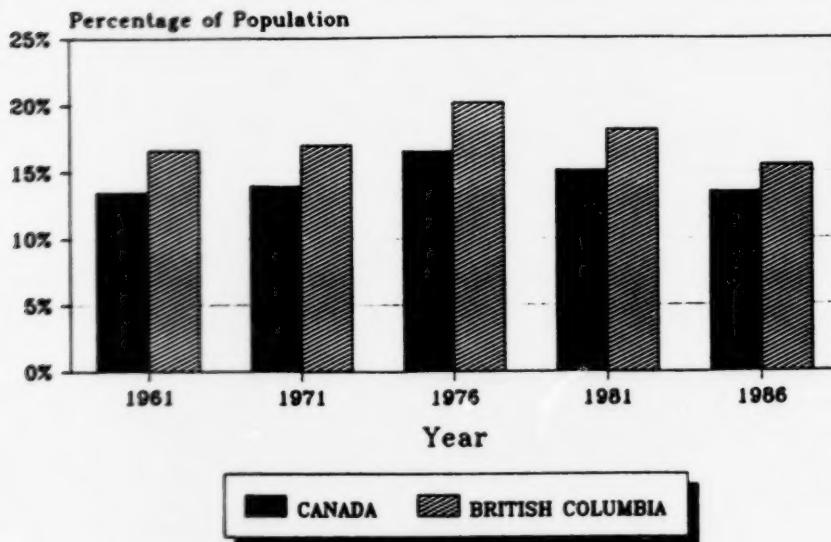


Statistics Canada Cat.93-108

### Movers: Non-Migrants (Same Municipality)

Changes in residence in the non-migrant classification assumes that the persons involved will not have to change their place of employment. In addition, past social networks will continue to be reasonably accessible.<sup>24</sup> The proportion of British Columbians who move within the same municipality is comparable to the Canadian average. It appears that about half of all movers - aged 5 and over - are within the same municipality.

# MOVERS : SAME PROVINCE CANADIAN AVERAGE & BRITISH COLUMBIA



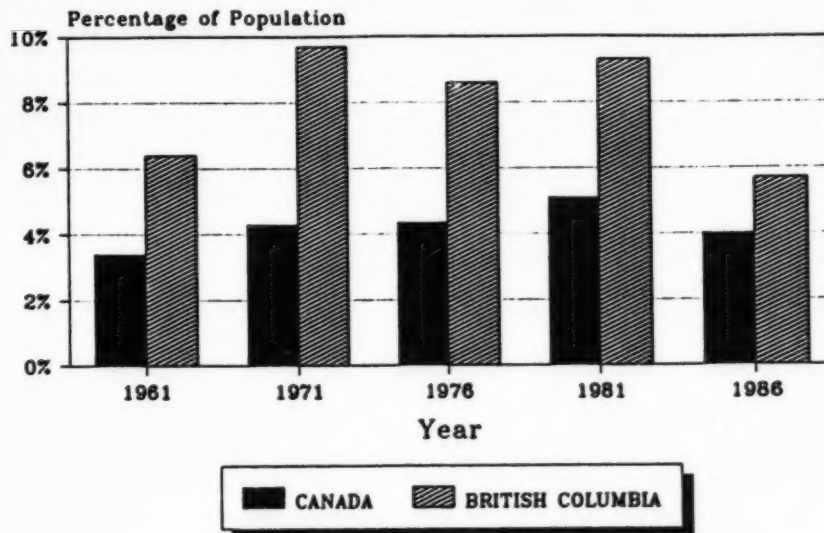
Statistics Canada Cat.93-108

## Movers: Migrants Same Province

A migrant move within the province represents a more significant change. Migration tends to follow hierarchic structures. The main migration destination is the next largest service centre with this pattern most strongly displayed for geographically isolated places.<sup>25</sup>

British Columbians make major moves within the province more often than residents of any other province. However, the latest census shows a declining distinction with a 2% difference between B.C. and the Canadian average.

## MOVERS : DIFFERENT PROVINCE 1961-1986 CANADA/BRITISH COLUMBIA COMPARISON

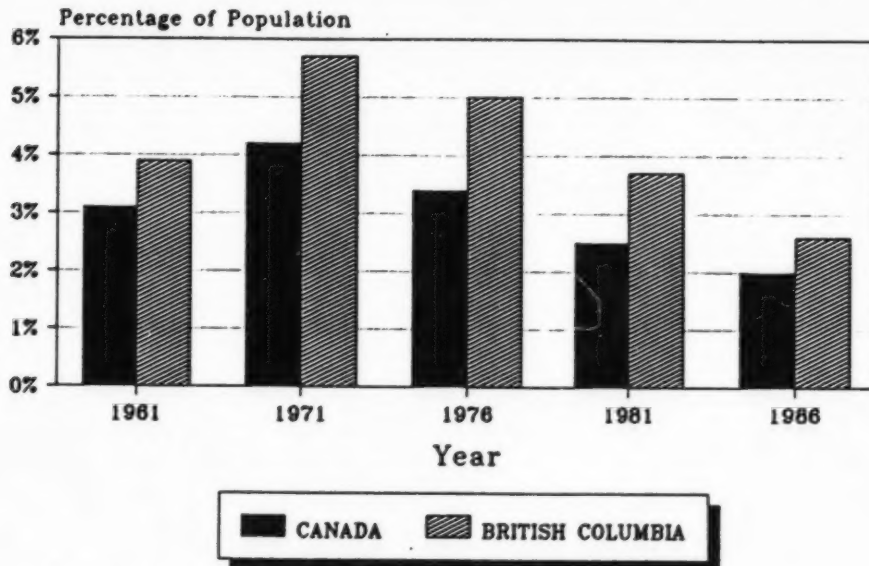


Statistics Canada Cat.93-108

### Movers: Different Province

British Columbia has had the reputation of attracting a high proportion of persons migrating between provinces due to its pleasant climate and prosperous economy. This assumption appears to be validated by the Census data between 1961 and 1981 when either B.C. or Alberta showed the greatest proportion of movers in this category. The 1986 data show a change in this trend with a sharp decline in the percentage of movers classified as migrants from different provinces.

# MOVERS : OUTSIDE CANADA 1961-1986 CANADA/BRITISH COLUMBIA COMPARISON

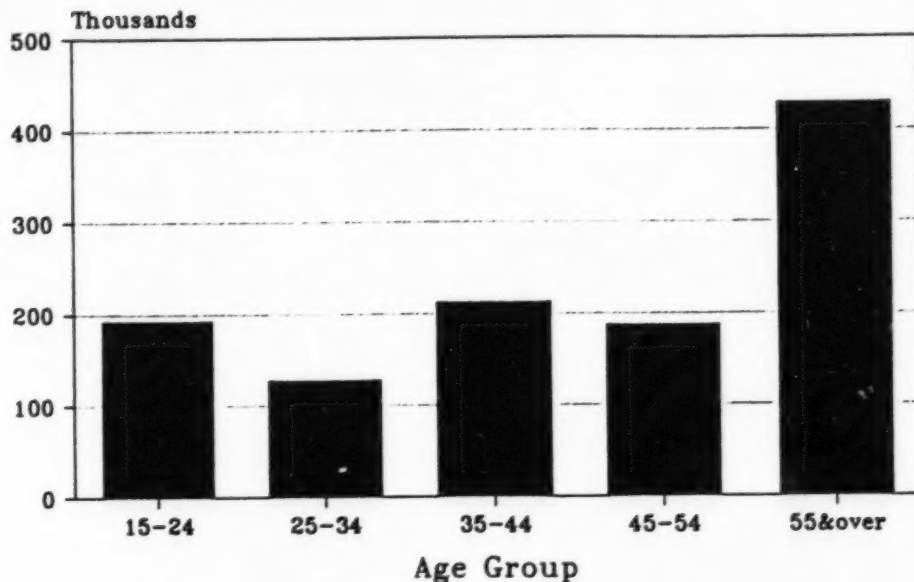


Statistics Canada Cat.93-106

## Movers: Outside Canada

British Columbia continues to have a greater proportion of migrants from outside Canada than the Canadian average and than all other provinces except Alberta in 1986.

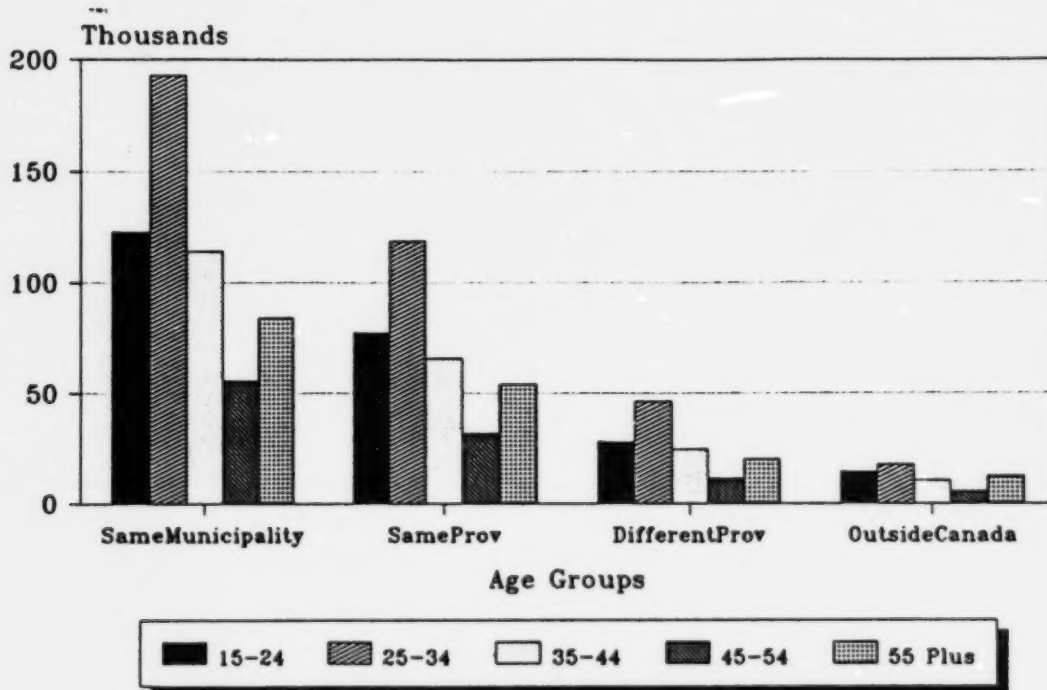
## NON-MOVERS BY AGE GROUP BRITISH COLUMBIA : 1981-1986



Census of Canada 1986

Non-Movers by Age Group represents the total number of persons who maintained the same residence for the five year period 1981 - 86. The older population aged 55 and over show the greatest residential stability.

# MOVERS BY AGE GROUP & TYPE OF MIGRATION BRITISH COLUMBIA : 1981-1986



Census of Canada 1986

Movers by Age Group and Type of Migration sets out the total number of persons indicating a change in residence between 1981 and 1986.

Persons aged 25 - 34 showed the greatest mobility in all migration categories. However, most changes of residence occurred within the same municipality or within the province. Persons aged 45 - 54 appear to have moved the least. However, there were roughly twice as many persons in the 55 plus age group as the 45 to 54 age group.

MOBILITY: SUMMARY

- o British Columbians move more often than the average Canadian.
- o The 1986 Census shows that over half the B.C. population moved at least once in the preceding five years.
- o Moves within the same municipality represent over half of all moves, similar to other provinces.
- o B.C. residents make major moves within the same province more often than other Canadians.
- o B.C. experiences the highest rate of migration compared to other provinces and countries (exception Alberta 1981 Census).
- o Mobility generally decreases with age.
- o High provincial mobility rates correlate with high provincial divorce rates in Canada.

# SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

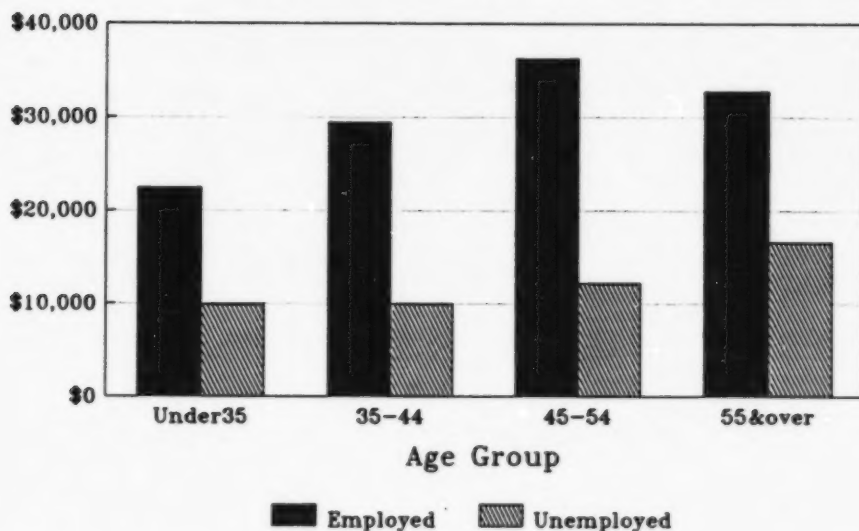
### SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

A statistical profile of the single parent family in 1989 offers little new information. Single parents continue to be primarily women (82% of single parents were women in 1986). Over half of these women and their children continue to live below the poverty line.

Recent statistics only confirm analysis documented since the 1971 Census except to demonstrate the vastly increasing population who now designate themselves as single parent families.

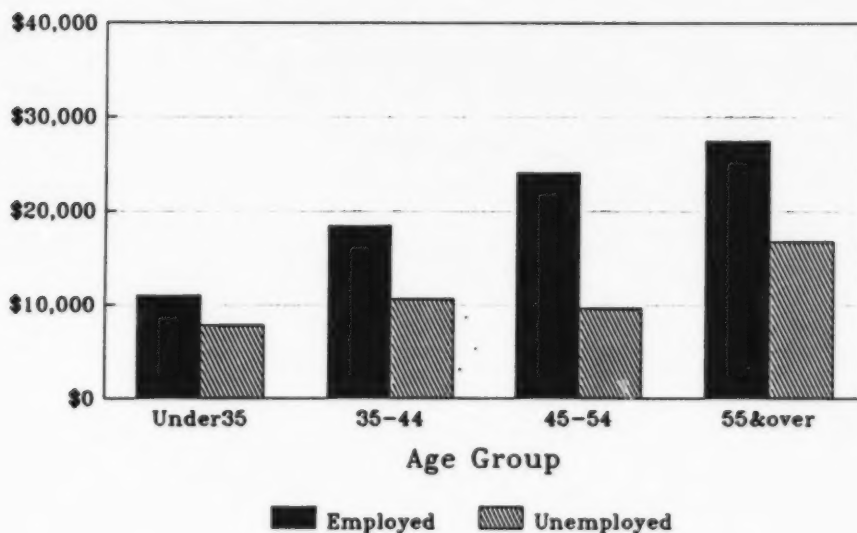
In 1971 there were 50,200 single parent families representing 9 % of all families with children in British Columbia. In 1986, there were 96,645 single parent families, 20% of all families with children in British Columbia. The actual number of single parents increased by 93% in the 15 years. Fathers continue to show low representation as single parents. In the recent past, custody determinations often relied heavily on the notion that young children belonged with their mothers. This legal doctrine of "tender years" is formally no longer a weighty argument in our courts. Nevertheless, statistics strongly suggest that this apparent legal readiness to accept fathers as adequate caretakers of their children has not been translated into fact. In 1971, 21% of British Columbia's single parents were male, representing 10,715 families. In 1986, 18% of single parents in British Columbia were male, representing 17,500 families.

### AVERAGE INCOME : 1986 SINGLE MALE PARENTS



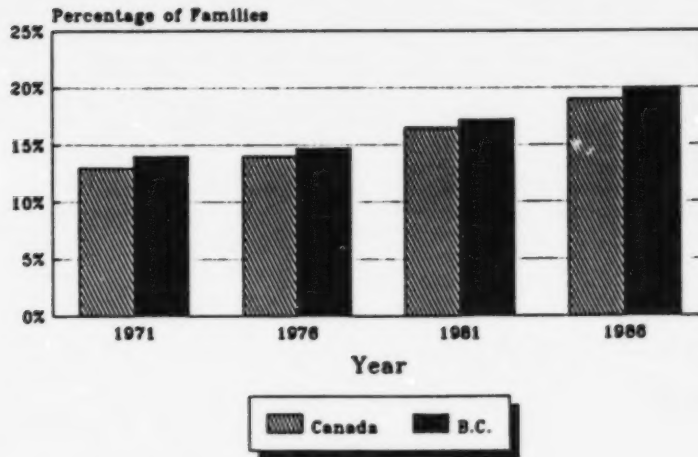
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### AVERAGE INCOME : 1986 SINGLE FEMALE PARENTS



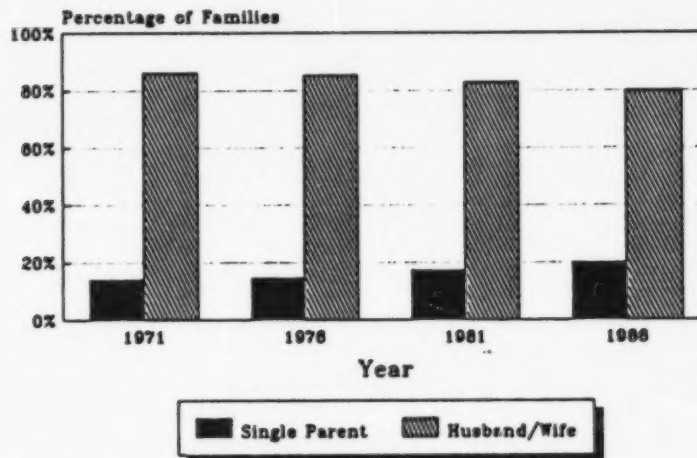
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### SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN: CANADA/BC



Calculation based on Census of Can. Data

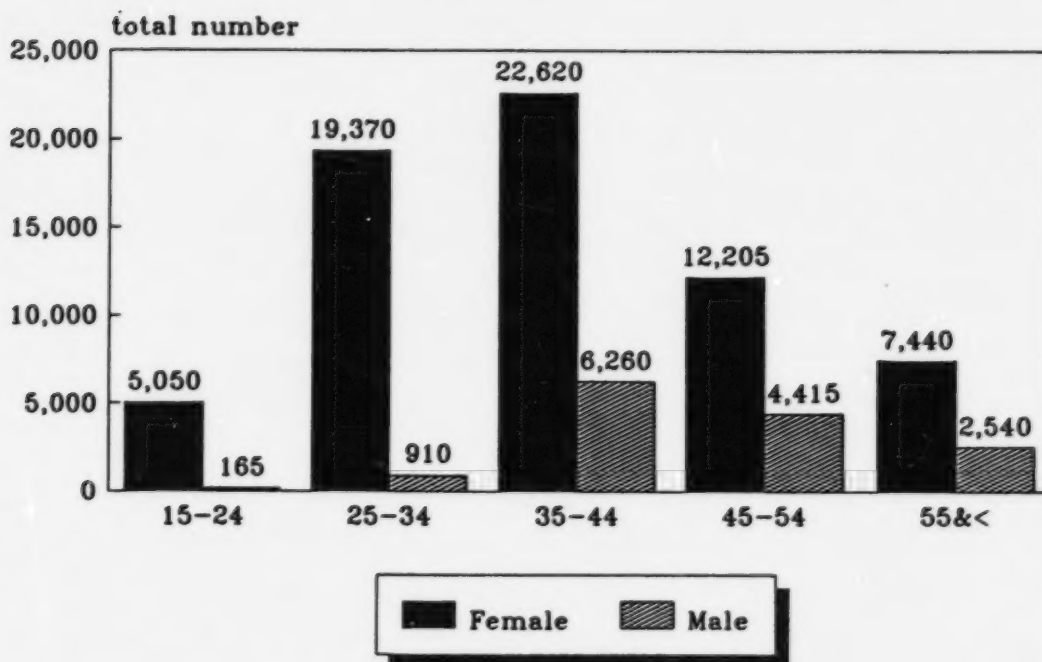
### THE PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE PARENT & TWO PARENT FAMILIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Calculations based on Census of Can. data

British Columbia has proportionately more single parent families than the Canadian average. The graph shows a steady increase over time in the proportion of single parent families compared to two parent families

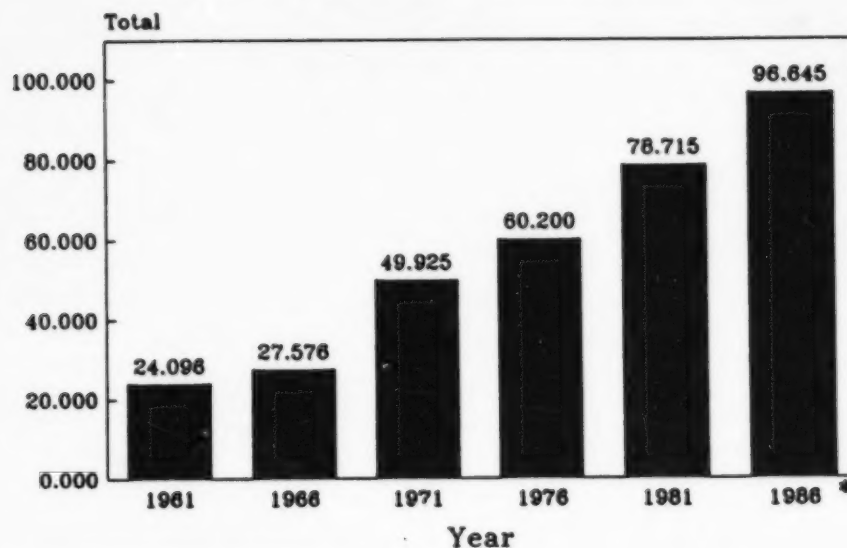
## NUMBER OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES BY SEX & AGE GROUP OF PARENT



Statistics Canada Cat.93-108

The 1986 Census data graphed by age group and sex shows that the likelihood of a father being a single parent increases with age. In the 15 - 24 year old age bracket 3% of the single parents were men. In the 45 - 54 and 55 and over age brackets men represent 27 and 26 per cent of single parents.

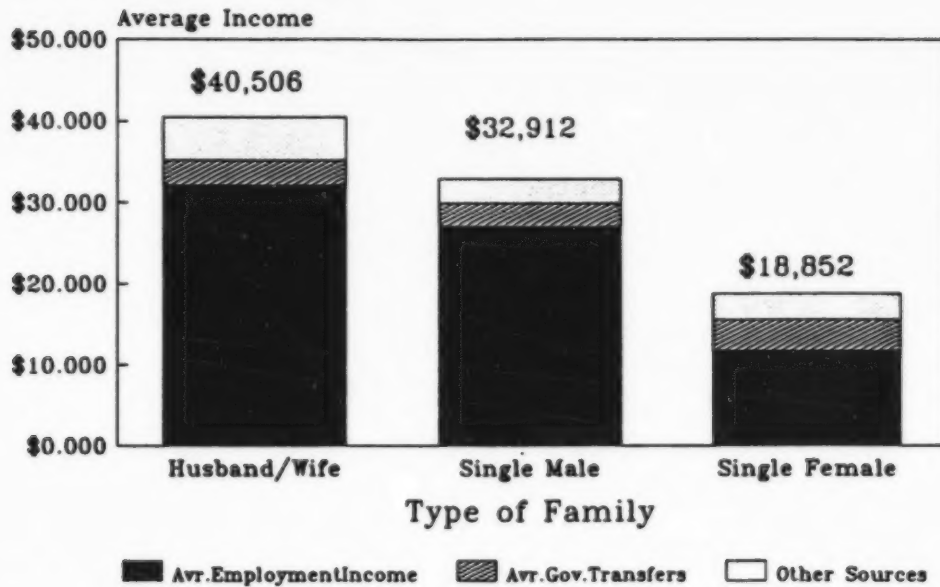
## TOTAL NUMBER OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES BRITISH COLUMBIA : 1971 - 1986



Source: Can. Census. \* Central Stats Bureau

In actual numbers the increase in the number of single parent families between 1961 and 1986 represents over a 300% increase in the 25 years.

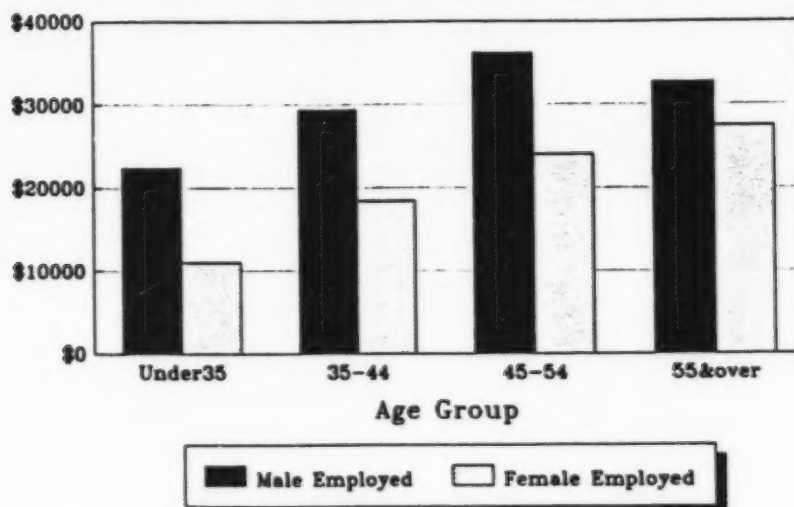
# AVERAGE FAMILY INCOME : 1986 HUSBAND/WIFE & SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES



Statistics Canada Cat.93-107

Income levels of single parents are much lower than husband/wife families.

## AVERAGE INCOME : B.C. 1986 SINGLE MALE & FEMALE PARENTS



Statistics Canada Cat.93-107

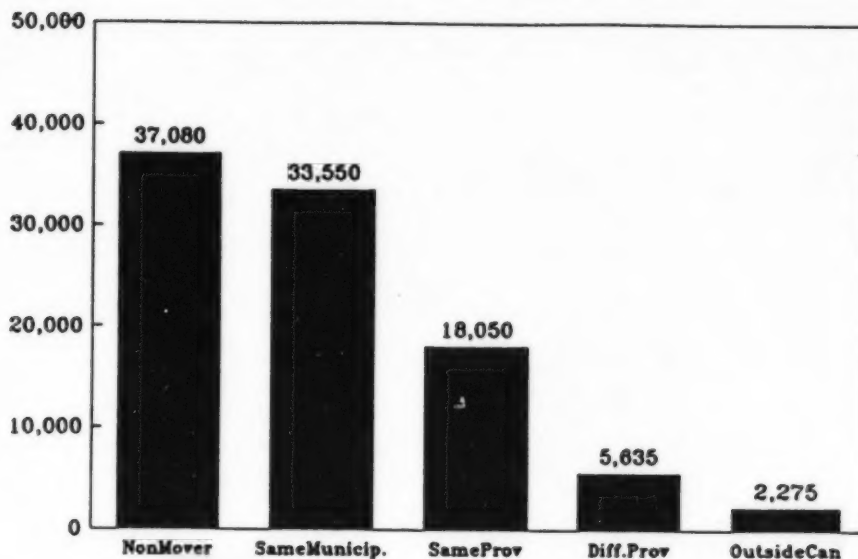
The income statistics simply confirm what is already well known. Males fare substantially better in the labour market with respect to higher income level. The age group showing the greatest difference due to sex of parent is the under 35 years category. Employed women earn less than half the average income of men. The average income of male single parents under 35 years was \$22,407 in 1986. The comparable female income was \$10,981. These statistics describe the average income of 24,429 employed single female parents who are most likely to have preschool aged children.

There is less of an income distinction in the higher age brackets particularly 55 years and older where it is assumed child care makes minimal demands. At 55 and over the average income of single parent males was \$32,732 in 1986 whereas females earned \$27,444. Both well above the poverty line as determined by Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off 1985.

The average income of unemployed single parents aged 54 and under and employed female single parents aged 35 and under is below the poverty line. Poverty and poor health have a longstanding co-existent relationship. Research shows that children living in poverty are more frequently exposed to such risks as medical illness, family stress, inadequate social support and depression.<sup>26</sup> In one American study of infants at risk the best predictor of longterm developmental outcomes was socioeconomic status, rather than type or degree of neonatal illness.<sup>27</sup>

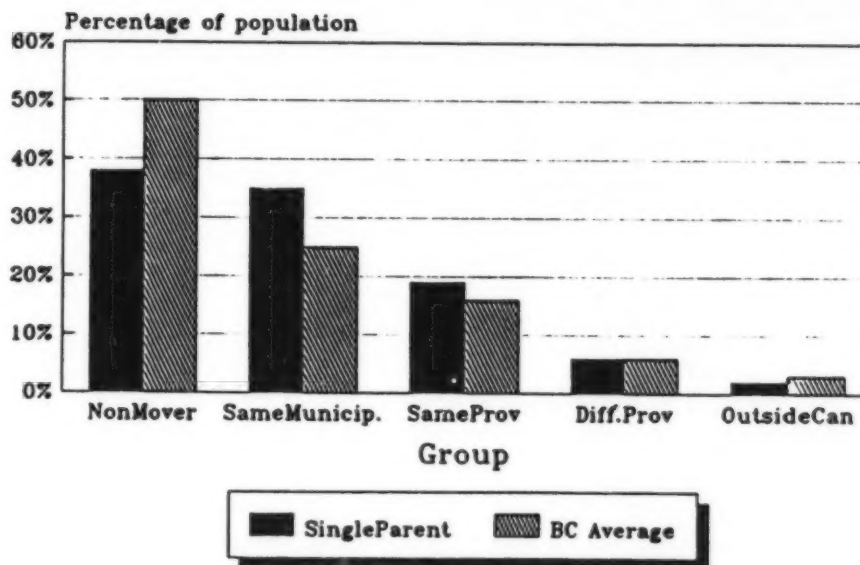
Children from lower income families show a death rate three times higher than children from other socio-economic classes with death statistics being characterized as the tip of the iceberg.<sup>28</sup> This enumeration of the circumstances which coexist with life below the poverty line are not exclusive to single parent families - however they are a dominant feature for a substantial portion of this family grouping.

## MOBILITY OF SINGLE PARENTS BY TYPE OF MOVE : 1986



Statistics Canada Cat.93-107

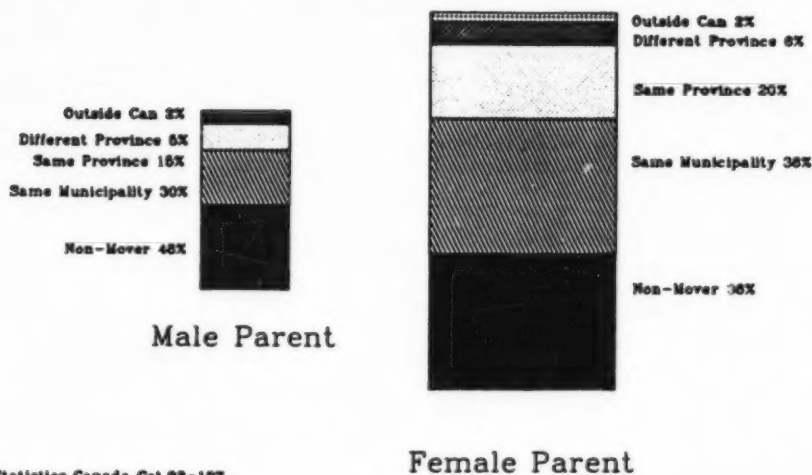
## MOBILITY COMPARISON SINGLE PARENTS & B.C. AVERAGE



Statistics Canada Cat.93-107

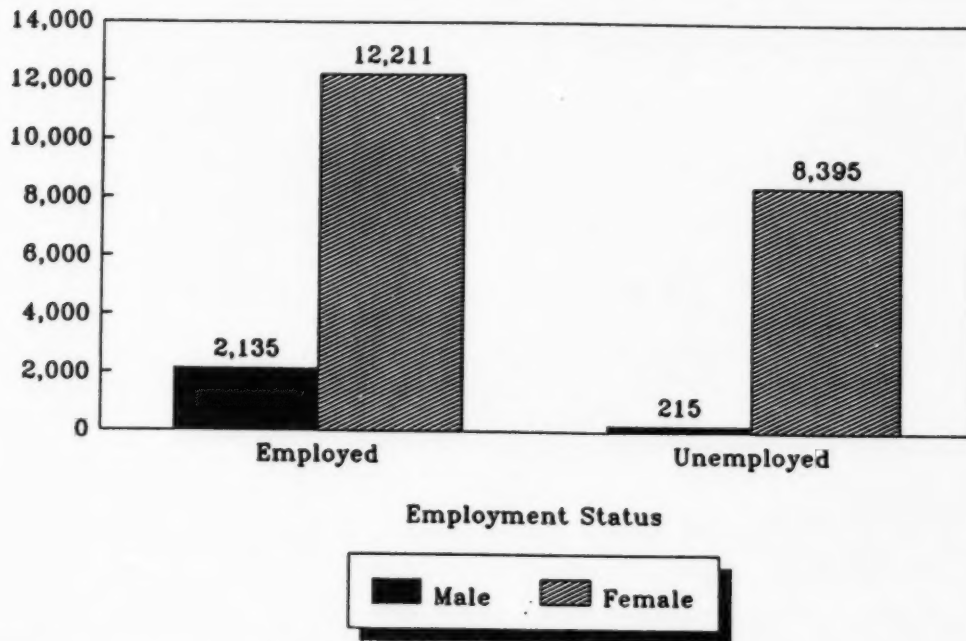
The 1986 Census shows that 62% of all single parent families in British Columbia moved between 1981 and 1986. Most moves were within the same municipality or census tracked region.

# MOBILITY OF SINGLE PARENTS : 1986 BY TYPE OF MOVE & SEX OF PARENT



Male single parents were less likely to move than female single parents. Non-movers represented 48% of the male headed families and 36% of female headed families. Male and female single parents moved at a similar rate from outside Canada or inter-provincially. The intra-provincial moves showed the difference in rate at 45% for males and 56% for females. The sizeable difference in total number of single families headed by males versus females means there were roughly 4 moves for female headed families for every one move for male headed families.

## SINGLE PARENTS WITH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN EMPLOYMENT STATUS



Statistics Canada Cat.93-107

In 1985, there were 14,346 employed single parents with preschool children who consequently may have required daycare.

Daycare is provided through a variety of facilities licensed by the provincial government or through private arrangement. An enumeration of licensed facilities for children 5 years and under was available for the Fall of 1989. At this time there were 7,122 full time places and 3,561 part time places in the province.<sup>29</sup>

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES: SUMMARY

- o B.C. has proportionately more single parent families than the Canadian average.
- o In 1986, one in five families with children were headed by a single parent in B.C.
- o There has been over a 300% increase in the number of single parent families in B.C. between 1961 and 1986.
- o In 1971, 79% of single parents were female, 21% male.
- o In 1986, 82% of single parents were female, 18% male.
- o The likelihood of a father being a single parent increases with age.
- o The greatest number of single parents are in the 35 to 44 year age group.
- o Income levels of single parents are lower than husband/wife families.
- o The average income of employed female single parents aged 35 years and under and unemployed single parents 54 and under is below the poverty line.
- o 62% of B.C. single parents were described as movers at the 1986 Census compared to a 50% B.C. general rate.

- o 52% of male single parents moved. 64% of female single parents moved.
- o There were roughly 4 movers per female headed family for every one move per male headed single parent family.
- o In 1986, there were 14,346 B.C. single parents who were employed and had children 5 years or under.

END NOTES

1. A. Skolnick, J. Skolnick, Family in Transition 4th ed. (Boston.Toronto: Little Brown & Co.)1983. p. 7.
2. Average age of death was 49.1 years for the 4000 male deaths and 47.8 years for the 2380 female deaths reported in the British Columbia Vital Statistics Annual Report 1930 (20 deaths, age not reported)
3. Family Relations Act, R.S.B.C., 1979, c.121, s.1 Interpretation. "Spouse" means a wife or husband and includes (c) except under Part 3, a man or woman not married to each other, who lived together as husband and wife for a period of not less than 2 years where an application under this Act is made by one of them against the other not more than one year after the date they ceased living together as husband and wife.
4. Family History Survey, Statistics Canada, 1984. Cat. 99-966 p 15.
5. Dhruva Nagnur, Owen Adams. "Tying the Knot: An Overview of Marriage Rates in Canada" Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Trends 1987, Autumn p. 2.
6. Roderic Beaujot, "Notes on Society: The Family in Crisis" Canadian Journal of Sociology 1988 VI3 (3) p. 305.
7. Ibid., p. 310.
8. The Doctrine of Tender Years: Historically the courts adopted the position that all things being equal, a mother is prima facie entitled to the custody of the child until the child attains about seven years of age during which period it needs the care of the mother more than that of the father, Henderson v. Henderson, [1977] 3 W.W.R. 316 (B.C. Prov. Ct.). However, as of late the courts have found that; The pattern of life in modern society is such that a father may be as able to care for such a child (under age seven) as the mother and the best interest of the child may be better suited by awarding custody to the father. Farkasch v. Farkasch, ante, Bryant v. Bryant, [1977], 4 R. F. L. (2nd) 210 (B.C. Prov. Ct.).
9. Joint custody is deemed to be an exceptional disposition reserved for a limited category of separated parents. It requires that the parents be judged able and willing to cooperate on behalf of the child and that the couple themselves request an award of joint custody. Baker v. Baker, [1979], 8 R. F. L. (2nd) 236 (Ont. C.A.).
10. Bali Ram, Reproduction: The Canadian Family in Transition J. of Biosocial Science 1988 V 20 p. 20.
11. Dependency Ratio: Central Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Finance Province of British Columbia 1989.
12. A. Romaniuc, Fertility in Canada: From Baby Boom to Baby Bust, Statistics Canada 1984, Ottawa, p. 101.
13. Ibid., p. 71.
14. Ibid.

15. Benjamin Schlesinger, The Single Teen-Age Canadian Mother in the 1980's, Conciliation Courts Rev. 1986, p. 91-102.
16. Province of British Columbia, Services for People, Annual Report of the Department of Human Resources (1972/73), p.26.
17. Conversation with Adoption Social Worker R. Raffel, 1988, Adoption Services Victoria, B.C.
18. Peter Rossi, Why Families Move, 2nd Ed. (1980), Sage Publications.
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